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called *Baigona* and were to be treated with affection and respect. They must be hailed and welcomed whenever they were seen; to kill or eat them was forbidden. These taboos extended to a number of other creatures—lizards, crocodiles, cuscus, and the like—all of which, in native belief, are commonly the reincarnations of departed spirits.

The originator of this cult imparted his knowledge of certain medicines, rites, and taboos to others, and this kind of individual initiation was passed on until there grew up a clique of '*Baigona* men', who might be called priests of the new cult, and who were to be found in villages as far north as the German boundary.

Meanwhile the horde of ignorant and gullible believers rapidly increased, comprehending little more of the new order than the general taboo regarding reptiles. The genuine *Baigona* men professed to practise healing, but there was another side to their activities: there is little doubt that they were sorcerers to a man, who held the masses in considerable fear and practised an easy kind of extortion. Together with other methods of professed healing they underwent themselves, and induced in their patients, paroxysms of a peculiarly horrible nature. These paroxysms became the general vogue among all who were affected by the cult, and this, together with the practice of sorcery and extortion, led the Government to discourage and suppress the movement. The craft of the *Baigona* men was virtually stamped out ten years ago, though in the interior of the Northern Division there are still to be found regular *Baigona* practitioners who, with a strange amount of confidence in themselves, continue to try their cures upon strangely confident patients. This practice, however, is thought by the natives to be against the law of the Government, and is therefore only in secret. Despite certain effects which it has left on native custom, the *Baigona* cult may be said to have died out. On the whole one is tempted to class it as thoroughly obnoxious.

It was very soon replaced by another movement,

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X 794 796 The rites—they hardly deserve such a name—are of an exceedingly sociable character, consisting typically of a singing in concert, to the accompaniment of drums, and of feasting with certain new forms of etiquette, the whole festive ceremony being known as *Kasamba*. The songs— [533] like so many native songs, unintelligible alike to the listener and the singers—would often appear to be, in their origin, exhortations or hymns of praise to the taro. [535] Certain sects perform distinctive dances, but, except in a few instances, the dance has not been highly elaborated, and remains a minor feature of the cult. Perhaps as an X 794 786 unintentional substitute, the innumerable followers of the movement indulged in various kinds of foolish antics, with reeling, staggering, and a violent shaking of the head and limbs known as *jipari*. There was no attempt to control these actions—rather the contrary—and they commonly ended in mild contortions and paroxysms. Such uncontrolled bodily movements do not belong to the Taro cult alone, but have been a common and unpleasant feature of many of the new religious movements enumerated above.

X 794 ● 792 While practically every one has been a willing convert to the Taro cult in so far as it meant participation in the song and feast, and while perhaps the majority have given way at some time or other to the pleasant abandonment of the *jipari*, there is a wide class of Taro *experts* or special exponents of the cult. It is impossible to set a definite limit to this class. There are some who are recognized as leaders and who are very strongly 'possessed', and others who are little more than laymen. However, it is possible to include them all under the name of *ba-embo*, which means literally 'Taro man'. Such men, who, like the *Baigona* men, might be called priests of the cult, officiate and lead in the ceremonial feasting; they perform certain duties in the taro gardens; they make a special practice of *jipari* and similar contortions; and they subject themselves to certain taboos. The theory of their conduct is that of possession by a spirit, either of the taro itself or of the dead.

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X 794 787 158 remote associations may seem causally effective to a native. Taimi happened to leave his lime-stick in his house; his mother, or his mother's spirit, spat on it; subsequently Taimi prodded his friend in the stomach with the stick, by now in some manner galvanized, and his friend was seized with a paroxysm.

X 794 ● 792 I have already referred to certain individual Taro men of distinction. The number of those who follow the cult in the Northern Division is not to be computed, but there are among them men of distinction and reputation who may be called leaders and who might be if necessary catalogued. Their pre-eminence is due partly to their own personality (for it is not every native who has the makings of a magician), and partly to mere priority. Thus, if one man communicates the Taro to another, the latter will probably recognize the former as his superior. This respect for superiors may sometimes take a comical [302] turn. To see a Taro man, his face covered with paint and his limbs with streaks of clay, his body stuck about with sprigs of coloured leaves, and his wits bemused by betel-nut—to see such a man offer a grave salute, in the exaggerated style of the Native Constabulary, to his superior, whose attire and demeanour even outdo his own, is almost as diverting to the European as it is impressive to the native. This habit of deference to the initiator results in a sort of hierarchy, very ill-defined, as might be expected, because the cult shows such a tendency to split up into minor sects, but nevertheless containing the seeds of an interesting development.

X 794 784 515 The disciple sometimes has to undergo a kind of probation. Having once acquired the Taro he must, for a considerable period (until, indeed, it is thoroughly established or ingrained into him), observe certain taboos. The chief of these is the taboo against washing. There are instances in which the enthusiastic acolyte forgoes the pleasures of a midday bathe for as long as eight months. When the Taro cult had crept insidiously into one of the mission schools, its presence was first

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detected—among a class of well-grown young females—by the missionary's nostrils. The reason for this taboo seems to lie in the supposed efficacy of running water, which will not only cleanse away impurity, but also carry off and dissipate the *mana* of the prophet. It is in keeping with this idea that the Taro novice be allowed, if necessary, to wash in *still*, swampy water. The taboos which are incumbent upon the professing Taro man will call for further description. The probationary taboo against washing should normally come to an end only with the permission of the superior who has been responsible for the novice's entry into the cult; but it must not be supposed that this rule is carried out in any strictness.

It sometimes happens that an aspirant grows tired of the restrictions which are imposed upon him; and even a qualified Taro man may voluntarily break through them and *ipso facto* relinquish his status. Thus we find 'resignations', sometimes because of the constant tiresome *jipari*, sometimes because of the taboo upon bathing, sometimes because the temptation of forbidden foods cannot be resisted. One man said he had given over the Taro because he was hungry for eels, *obiti*, which are banned to the faithful. Another, wounded in a village affray and temporarily incapacitated, had obtained a sort of absolution from the man who introduced him to the cult, and by bathing in a stream thus automatically ceased to be a Taro man.

It is entirely in keeping with native custom that payment should be made by the initiate to his superior, though such payment does not seem to be necessary or invariable. At any rate, it is not so much that the master makes a charge, but rather that the disciple makes a gift in return for services rendered. It is said that the improvement in the taro crop will amply justify the gratitude of the new Taro man to his teacher.

A man of Katuna—now a veritable hot-bed of Taro—had visited Buninia in the early days of the cult. Sleeping in the master's house he shook and dreamt simultane-

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ously, and awoke to the realization that he had received the Taro. When subsequently Buninia paid a visit to Katuna, all the friends of the recent convert contributed to the reward—a pig and a number of ornaments.

I have known an old man express himself delighted at his son's conversion to *Diroga*, declaring that he meant to reward the man who had initiated him. When we hear the initiator declaring (probably with truth) that he means to make a return present to the old man, we understand that the payments—if so we may call them—are neither formal nor exacting. The payments for 'curing' are sometimes of a different character, and will be referred to again.

(2) *Direct Inspiration.* It has been said that the Taro man, besides acknowledging his debt to another Taro man before him, commonly claims to receive a direct inspiration of his own. 'Taking the Taro'—as the expression goes—means primarily being possessed by the spirit (either of the taro itself or of the dead), and the first symptom of this possession is some kind of involuntary movement of the body, perhaps nothing more than a twitching of the shoulder. This usually takes place in the learner while he is in some close association with the teacher, i.e. the latter communicates the 'Taro' to the former. As we have seen (pp. 31–2), contiguity or contact or some more or less remote association is required between the two. But it is not merely a sort of spiritual transfusion. Ideas are a little mixed on this point, but in the great majority of cases it appears that the learner is possessed by a different spirit from that which possesses the teacher. (This presumption on the part of the native makes it difficult for him to explain why the possession of any man usually takes place through association with one already possessed. The reason seems obvious enough to us, but perhaps is not sufficiently profound for native metaphysics. At any rate this point was never satisfactorily explained.)

Besides being indebted to the teacher in this somewhat

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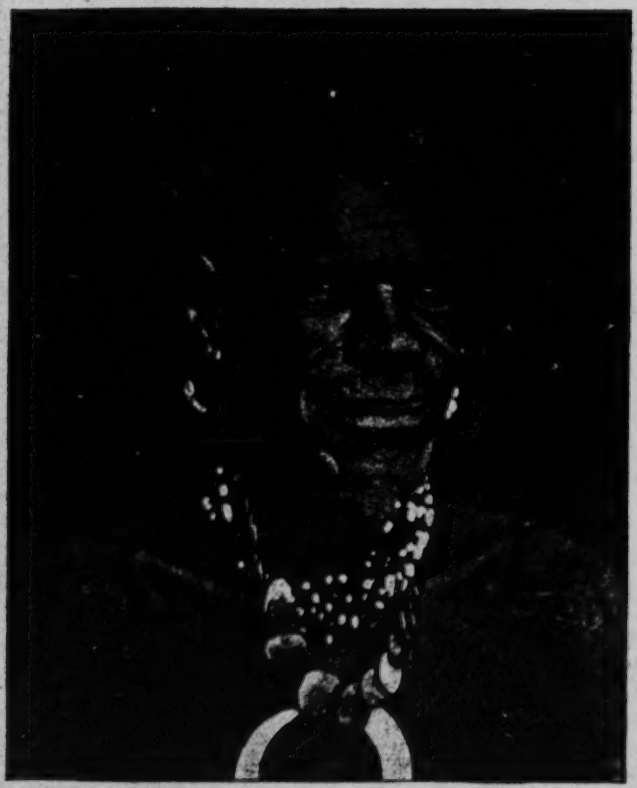

YAVIRIPA

One of the originators of the Taro Cult

[Facing p.78]

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X-194 pp. 3 and 4, foot-notes), but I may give a brief account of it here for the sake of comparison with the Taro cult, of which it may be regarded perhaps not as a variant but as a rival. The originators were Dasiga and Bia of Manau, near the mouth of the Mambare, and the beginning of the cult was almost contemporaneous with that of Taro. It has been very plausibly suggested that the Manau prophets, not having received an invitation to the inauguration of the Taro cult at Taututu, were offended or merely jealous, and set up a rival business of their own. If this be so the competition was an unequal one: the Manau cult never achieved a wide popularity, and has long since become a memory.

X-194 Of the two originators Dasiga was no doubt the real visionary. He is a man of striking and almost fanatical ● 192 appearance, whose perpetual sternness of demeanour 157 does not hide his real stupidity. He was formerly the village constable of Manau. Now he is a mission convert, and has adopted Christianity with what I imagine to be his characteristic intensity. Bia is a man of a different cast. My acquaintance with him is very short, but long enough to endorse Mr. Chinnery's opinion that he is a 'notorious sorcerer and a most plausible rogue'. He is a man of strong personality and magnificent physique, and to these advantages adds the prestige of his former rank of corporal in the Armed Constabulary. It may well be that he turned to profit the queer temperament of Dasiga; he saw the visions which Dasiga had seen, and entered into a spiritual partnership in which he supplied most of the brains. We might credit Dasiga with some sincerity, and Bia with a great deal of cunning. In passing I may record the same impression regarding Buninia and his collaborator Yaviripa—the latter a singularly alert, intelligent man, the former a visionary old duffer. It is significant that both Bia and Yaviripa were formerly *Baigona* men.

X-194 Dasiga dreamed and went up into the sky where he 192 saw God, and received from Him certain instructions. 187

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As he recounted them to me they were commandments against 'swearing',[1] theft, adultery, and anger, and two positive injunctions—to be like the missionaries and like the white men. He also laid down a form of service which has been well described by Mr. L. A. Flint, formerly the magistrate in charge of the Ioma District. The only record of this ceremony is the rotting wooden pillar in Manau around which the worshippers, led by Dasiga and Bia, were wont to assemble.

It is to Mr. Henry Holland that we are especially indebted for information about the Manau cult. He had several meetings with the principals which are amusing as well as instructive. On Christmas Eve of 1920 he was in the rest house at Totoadari when Dasiga sought him out and requested an outline of Christian teaching. Mr. Holland willingly complied, and when he had finished Dasiga said, 'I knew all that before'.

On the second occasion, at the old mission station of St. Andrews on the middle Mambare, Dasiga asked why the taro was not growing well. Mr. Holland made some suggestions of a horticultural nature, to which Dasiga replied, 'No, they say it is because of God's anger'. Thereupon followed a long theological discussion in which Dasiga took the part rather of a disputant than a learner. Rising finally to take his leave, in the very dignified manner of which he is capable, he burst into a volume of unintelligible gibberish. When he had finished he addressed Mr. Holland again in Binandele: 'Do you understand?' Mr. Holland confessed he did not. 'God's praise,' said Dasiga, and left him.

Some time after this Mr. Holland visited Manau and was met on the beach by one Bairi, a minor leader. He was well groomed, with his hair neatly clipped, carried a walking-stick, and greeted the visitor with an English 'Good morning'. He wished to show him a letter from Jesus Christ, he said, and produced from wrappings of calico and bark-cloth a stray missive which a neighbour-

[1] i.e. abuse, wrangling.

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ing planter had sent to the master of the launch *Misima*, asking him to call for copra. Explaining how he had come by this letter, Bairi said he had eaten a large pine-apple, and that after (apparently as the result of a disturbance less terrible than he deserved) his spirit rose up into the sky, where he saw Jesus Christ, a white man with a beard. He was informed that 'something had fallen for him', and having been conducted down from the sky by a ladder, subsequently discovered this letter. Mr. Holland was much struck by the man's earnestness in telling the story. Bairi had been instructed by Jesus to visit the Lutheran Mission on the river Waria, where apparently he merely announced himself and then returned. Jesus had also told him that he was to be 'the New Guinea Missionary'.

After this interview with Bairi, Mr. Holland entered Manau and witnessed a service led by Dasiga, who was seated on a box in the midst of the worshippers. The preacher rose to greet him but broke out again into unintelligible incantations, shaking his head, and affecting to read out of the palm of his hand. He would finish his incantation by intoning *Jesu Kerisu kaena-embo*, 'Jesus Christ the man for us'; otherwise his words were entirely meaningless. Mr. Holland asked what he saw in the palm of his hand, and was told that Christ's messages appeared there. Asked more precisely what the messages were, Dasiga replied, 'This must not be written in a book'. 'But', said the missionary, 'God is open and hides nothing.' Admitting this, Dasiga (who must have been something of a dialectician) replied by a question: 'Where do your people go when they die?' 'They sleep, then rise again and appear before God.'

'Well, it is just the same with us,' replied Dasiga, and Mr. Holland abandoned further questioning.

There seems to have been nothing of taro worship in the Manau cult, though it was made plain that the prosperity of the crops depended on a proper observance of the new rites. The *jipari*, however, was as essential

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A more difficult question is the effect of the Taro cult on life and manners. This is naturally somewhat complex. We have seen that the ostensible purpose of the cult is to promote the fertility of the gardens. In reality the rites which are most directly aimed at this result seem on the whole useless, and in one or two cases destructive. However, it is likely that the gardens do receive some benefit from the cult simply by the increased interest with which it has invested them, and that this indirect benefit outweighs many times the small amount of harm done by such a ceremony as that of medicining the taro (pp. 42, 43).

Those who travel in the Northern Division cannot fail to be impressed by the frequency of Taro feasts and functions. It would be wrong, however, to regard these as mere waste of time, as if the cult were making greater idlers than ever of the natives. It is in fact providing them with a new interest to which they devote much of the time that would otherwise be spent less pleasurably and probably less profitably.

It is perhaps on law and organization that the Taro cult has the most significant effect, albeit a rudimentary and indefinite one. The voluntary acceptance of a new ritual, however lax, the observance of taboos, the necessity for probation, are all influences making for law and law-abidingness. More significant still is the elementary hierarchy which we have observed among the Taro men (p. 32). The existence of leaders in one tribe who are recognized by distant votaries of the cult in another tribe stands perhaps for a new idea among the Orokaiva. The absence of any political cohesion among and within the peoples of Papua has been remarked by others. It is conceivable that such a movement as Taro might give the initial impetus to some more or less spontaneous political organization.

The emergence of strong personalities who attain to an eminent position in the cult may give promise of a more advanced kind of chieftainship than the very primitive

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patriarchate which has been the Orokaiva fashion. While, however, we may welcome these signs of an incipient chieftainship in the power and influence of the Taro men, we cannot deny that they are to some extent—how far I have been unable to decide—founded upon the obnoxious practice of sorcery. Incidentally the theory of possession and the double role of priest and magician which the Taro man is called upon to play may give some colour to the theory that the functions of magician, priest, and chieftain were originally combined.

We have already noted the mutual amity which prevails among all branches of the cult, and have discovered cause to suspect that it is based on the fear of sorcery (p. 47). This general amity or fraternity, however, whatever its basis may be, is not only a striking, but on the whole a commendable feature of the cult. Clashes of arms—part in fun, part in earnest—are still common enough among the clans of the north; the warlike display at the welcome of visitors which sometimes leads to these affrays is in fact a regular custom. But although the Taro parties are constantly engaged in travel and visiting, I know of no serious quarrel between rival parties *qua* Taro parties. It is not necessary to observe that, but for the previous pacification of the Division, the Taro cult could never have spread itself so widely in so short a time. But it is still true that the cult is consolidating the work to which it was in the first place indebted. In fine, by arousing this elementary tendency toward cohesion, by establishing the intertribal power of a few individuals, and by advancing the spirit of intertribal friendliness, the Taro cult has played its part in emphasizing the unity of the Orokaiva. No movement of native origin has, since European occupation, made the same universal appeal to all the clans and tribes of this people.

We may briefly consider the effect of the Taro cult on Orokaiva art. This art, comparatively ill-developed on the decorative side, has attained to a high degree of perfection in the conduct of certain ceremonies. The

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APPENDIX

(Extract from a letter from Rev. E. Raff, Vila, New Hebrides)

10th Jan. 1924.

794 On Santo, one of the largest and the most northerly island of this group, we have had an outbreak of insanity very similar to that in the Gulf Division of Papua. Some years ago several 'prophets' arose and caused great unrest among the people prophesying a flood in which only the elect, i.e. their 'paid up' followers, would be saved and promising resurrections and a ship from Sydney filled with rice and trade goods.

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A large house was built to receive these goods and on one occasion the people nearly took possession of a recruiting schooner in the belief that their ship had arrived. Every passing sail aroused great excitement and fire-signals from the anxious watchers posted on the beach. Emissaries of the chief prophet travelled far and wide over Santo and enrolled hundreds, perhaps thousands, who paid first pigs and later money, 5*s.* to £1, for the privilege and the promised benefits. In one quarter the plantation boys were convinced of the truth of the prophet's assertions, because, though he had never been to school, he could write 'language belong white man'. In evidence they produced a piece of paper scrawled with unintelligible marks.

794 Some of the natives heard that Ronovuro, the chief prophet, had raised a dead cow and at one of the 'sing sings' (dances) a follower 792 who fell down 'dead' was promptly revived. But the promised 775 resurrections were postponed time and time again, and at last it was given out that the 'whites' who were the cause of most deaths (except old age) on Santo were also preventing the resurrections and the cry became 'Santo for the Santoese' and ideas arose about driving out the whites.

794 Credence was given to this idea by an old story which became 775 very popular. This old story told how, when at last a noted native murderer was done to death, all his victims came to life. The natural deduction was 'Kill the whites who have caused the deaths and the dead shall arise'. About sixteen months ago I was on Santo and things were then in a dangerous condition.

794 The culmination was a tragedy which occurred on the 24th of 775 July of last year. Ronovuro was holding a great 'sing sing' at the conclusion of which the resurrections were to take place. 674 Probably it was decided then that the Europeans were to die. A half-caste visited this 'sing sing' and was recognized by Ronovuro